



# Southwestern Idaho News

ADA, ADAMS, BOISE, CANYON, ELMORE, GEM, OWYHEE, PAYETTE, VALLEY & WASHINGTON COUNTIES

## ECONOMIC TRENDS

The seasonally adjusted unemployment rate for the Boise-Nampa Metropolitan Statistical Area for February was 3 percent, up two-tenths of a percentage point from January's revised rate of 2.8 percent. Still, February's rate was three-quarters of a percentage point below February 2005's rate. The slight increase from January signaled a labor market that fell short of accommodating another influx of people seeking work. There were 3,700 more people working in February than in January, up 1.3 percent, but the labor force grew by 4,400 to push the unemployment rate higher. These new job seekers are either from outside the area and entering the labor force for the first time or previously discouraged workers who have been reenergized by the strengthening economy. A 3 percent unemployment rate, however, is still extremely low, and the fact that new job seekers are entering the labor market is a positive sign for employers seeking additional manpower.

Southwestern Idaho Table 2: February 2006  
Seasonally Adjusted Labor Force Figures for Southwestern Idaho Counties

	Civilian Labor Force	Number Unemployed	Percent Unemployed	Number Employed
Ada	194,142	4,938	2.5	189,204
Adams	1,796	138	7.7	1,658
Boise	3,377	125	3.7	3,252
Canyon	80,818	2,529	3.1	78,290
Elmore	10,407	423	4.1	9,984
Gem	7,727	256	3.3	7,471
Owyhee	5,515	92	1.7	5,422
Payette	10,845	612	5.6	10,234
Valley	4,770	181	3.8	4,589
Washington	4,947	205	4.1	4,742
Statewide	748,584	24,523	3.3	724,061

Southwestern Idaho Table 1: Boise City-Nampa MSA Labor Force & Employment (Ada, Canyon, Boise, Gem and Owyhee counties)

	Feb 2006*	Jan 2006	Feb 2005	% Change Last Month	% Change Last Year
<b>INDIVIDUALS BY PLACE OF RESIDENCE</b>					
<b>Seasonally Adjusted</b>					
Civilian Labor Force	291,400	287,000	280,200	1.5	4.0
Unemployment	8,600	7,900	10,600	8.9	-18.9
% of Labor Force Unemployed	3.0	2.8	3.8		
Total Employment	282,800	279,100	269,600	1.3	4.9
<b>Unadjusted</b>					
Civilian Labor Force	292,500	287,300	282,200	1.8	3.6
Unemployment	10,200	10,400	12,600	-1.9	-19.0
% of Labor Force Unemployed	3.5	3.6	4.5		
Total Employment	282,300	276,900	269,600	2.0	4.7
<b>JOBS BY PLACE OF WORK</b>					
<b>Nonfarm Payroll Jobs**</b>					
GOODS-PRODUCING INDUSTRIES	50,200	49,900	47,700	0.6	5.2
<b>Natural Resources &amp; Construction</b>					
Construction	20,400	20,300	17,700	0.5	15.3
<b>Manufacturing</b>					
Durable Goods	23,700	23,500	23,400	0.9	1.3
Wood Product Manufacturing	2,000	2,000	2,100	0.0	-4.8
Fabricated Metal Products Mfg.	1,400	1,400	1,400	0.0	0.0
Machinery Manufacturing	1,200	1,200	1,300	0.0	-7.7
Computer & Electronic Manufacturing	13,800	13,700	14,400	0.7	-4.2
Transportation Equipment Mfg.	2,000	1,900	2,000	5.3	0.0
Other Durable Goods	3,300	3,300	2,200	0.0	50.0
Nondurable Goods	6,100	6,100	6,600	0.0	-7.6
Food Manufacturing	4,300	4,300	4,800	0.0	-10.4
Printing & Related Support Activities	700	700	700	0.0	0.0
Other Nondurable Goods	1,100	1,100	1,100	0.0	0.0
SERVICE-PRODUCING INDUSTRIES	210,100	207,500	198,000	1.3	6.1
<b>Trade, Transportation, &amp; Utilities</b>					
Trade	43,400	43,400	39,400	0.0	10.2
Wholesale Trade	11,900	11,800	11,000	0.8	8.2
Wholesalers, Durable Goods	7,300	7,200	6,700	1.4	9.0
Wholesalers, Nondurable Goods	3,300	3,300	3,400	0.0	-2.9
Retail Trade	31,500	31,600	28,400	-0.3	10.9
Food & Beverage Stores	4,400	4,400	4,100	0.0	7.3
General Merchandise Stores	6,300	6,500	5,900	-3.1	6.8
All Other Retail Trade	20,800	20,700	18,400	0.5	13.0
Transportation, Warehousing, & Utilities	7,300	7,200	6,900	1.4	5.8
Utilities	500	500	600	0.0	-16.7
Transportation & Warehousing	6,800	6,700	6,300	1.5	7.9
<b>Information</b>					
Telecommunications	5,200	5,200	5,000	0.0	4.0
<b>Financial Activities</b>					
Finance & Insurance	14,400	14,300	13,400	0.7	7.5
Real Estate & Rental & Leasing	10,100	10,000	9,100	1.0	11.0
<b>Professional &amp; Business Services</b>					
Professional, Scientific, & Technical	4,300	4,300	4,300	0.0	0.0
Management of Companies & Ent.	37,000	36,600	35,800	1.1	3.4
Administrative & Support & Waste Mgmt.	11,300	11,300	10,800	0.0	4.6
<b>Educational &amp; Health Services</b>					
Educational Services	31,900	31,400	30,800	1.6	3.6
Health Care & Social Assistance	3,100	2,600	2,900	19.2	6.9
Hospitals	28,800	28,800	27,900	0.0	3.2
<b>Leisure &amp; Hospitality</b>					
Arts, Entertainment, & Recreation	9,300	9,300	9,200	0.0	1.1
Accommodation & Food Services	22,400	22,300	21,400	0.4	4.7
Accommodation	3,200	3,100	2,800	3.2	14.3
Food Services & Drinking Places	19,200	19,200	18,600	0.0	3.2
<b>Other Services</b>					
Food Services & Drinking Places	2,100	2,100	2,000	0.0	5.0
Other Services	17,100	17,100	16,600	0.0	3.0
<b>Total Government</b>					
Federal Government	7,200	7,200	6,200	0.0	16.1
State & Local Government	41,300	39,900	39,100	3.5	5.6
State Government	5,400	5,400	5,600	0.0	-3.6
State Government Education	35,900	34,500	33,500	4.1	7.2
State Government Administration	13,700	12,700	13,000	7.9	5.4
Local Government	4,900	3,900	4,700	25.6	4.3
Local Government Education	8,800	8,800	8,300	0.0	6.0
Local Government Administration	22,200	21,800	20,500	1.8	8.3
Local Government Administration	14,100	13,700	12,700	2.9	11.0
	8,100	8,100	7,800	0.0	3.8

\* Preliminary Estimate

\*\* Full- or part-time jobs of people who worked for or received wages in the pay period including the 12th of the month

Nonfarm payroll jobs in the region began rising in February after January's seasonal decline. About 2,900 jobs were added to payrolls in February, a monthly increase of 1.1 percent. Hiring resumed in the construction industry with another 100 new jobs. Manufacturing expanded by 200 jobs in computer and electronic products, reflecting the resurgence of the high-tech industry in southwestern Idaho, and in transportation equipment despite the shortage of welders that has plagued the area's industrial manufacturers. Seasonal factors in the service sector were primarily responsible for the new jobs there that accounted for most of the payroll increase. Employment agencies saw increased demand in February for high-tech, construction and manufacturing workers. Another 300 jobs were added in the administrative support and waste management sector. Education, past the holiday vacation period, increased payrolls by 1.1 percent. The start of a new semester was underscored by the addition of 1,400 government jobs in state and local education.

Between February 2005 and February 2006, 14,600 jobs were created in the metropolitan area, an increase of 5.9 percent that maintains the region's year-over-year trend of robust growth. The February 2006 civilian labor force and total employment figures for all 10 counties in southwestern Idaho are shown in Treasure Valley Table 2 on page 12.

## AREA DEVELOPMENTS

### Boise MSA

- According to the latest Manpower Employment Outlook Survey, 30 percent of the region's employers indicated they will be hiring during the second quarter. Approximately 64 percent of survey participants said they intended to keep employment levels steady and only 3 percent planned on reducing the number of employers. Industries doing most of the hiring are construction, utilities, wholesale and retail trade and transportation.
- New U.S. Census Bureau estimates ranked Canyon County the nation's 71<sup>st</sup> fastest growing county. The only other Idaho county making the list was Kootenai County, which came in at 69<sup>th</sup>. Canyon County's ranking was down from 2004's 45<sup>th</sup>.
- February's inflation rate in the metropolitan area rose a half a percentage point, according to the latest Wells Fargo Boise Area Cost of Living Report. Contributing most to the increase were utilities, which went up 4.2 percent, and transportation,

which rose 1.3 percent. Transportation costs in the region jumped 14 percent between September and February compared with just a 7.9 percent increase nationwide. By contrast, the area's utility costs went up 9.3 percent during that same period while utilities rose 18.7 percent nationally. The increase in southwestern Idaho utility bills was likely due to colder temperatures than normally experienced during the winter months.

- Home sales in Canyon County have been slowing in recent months. November was the last month that the number of homes sold increased from the previous month. Rising interest rates and the colder winter may be responsible. But despite the monthly declines in home sales since then, the numbers are still above year-ago levels. The median selling price also declined in February by \$1,500 to \$146,000.
- Ada County recently broke ground on a new addition to its landfill. The \$15.5 million North Ravine Cell should handle Ada County's solid waste removal needs for the next 100 years. Topsoil is being removed and the landfill area is being lined with a protective barrier to prevent leakage and ground contamination.
- Boise's Capital City Development Corp. recently announced a new developer for the Boise Tower project. Charterhouse Boise Downtown Properties LLC was chosen for the project, which it says will be renamed and could be under construction again within six months. The project is expected to cost between \$75 million and \$80 million and take two years to complete.
- Meridian will be the location of the newest Sierra Trading Post retail store. Sierra Trading Post buys name brand overstock items and sells them at discounted prices. The store plans to open in late 2006 in a new 25,000-square-foot building near Meridian's Home Depot store and employ about 20 people.
- Oregon-based G.I. Joe's, a retailer of outdoor sporting equipment, has announced plans to open two stores in Boise in the next three years. The company hopes to open the first store in summer 2007 and the second 12 to 18 months later. Once the 52,000-square-foot store opens, it will employ 55 full-time workers.
- Pending regulatory approval, Microsoft is buying Boise-based ProClarity Corp., a data analysis soft-

ware maker using Microsoft platforms. ProClarity employs 105 people in Boise, and Microsoft has said ProClarity operations will remain there. Before the acquisition, Microsoft and ProClarity shared over 1,200 customers including large corporations such as GE, Hewlett-Packard and AT&T.

- Nampa's Mercy Medical Center will open a new orthopedic floor on July 1. The 21-room, 20,000-square-foot area cost just over \$2 million. Mercy's current orthopedic center covers just 7,600 square feet.
- Construction activity in Ada County through the first two months of the year remained strong, contradicting forecasts of a slowdown in 2006. When comparing February 2006 with a year earlier, total permit value in Boise rose to \$35 million from \$31 million. In Meridian, the value was up \$1 million to \$52 million. Commercial construction led the way in Boise while single family homes dominated in Meridian, accounting for 94 percent of the total monthly value.
- The U.S. Department of Agriculture recently approved a \$10,000 grant for Gem County to conduct a feasibility study on a new hotel in the county or in Emmett. The hotel would employ about 15 people.

#### Valley County

- Tamarack Resort plans six eight-unit buildings for employee housing. The resort wants the units built over the summer so they can be rented to employees next ski season. Up to 290 employees work at the resort during the winter months.

#### Elmore County

- The dedication of the newly remodeled Mountain Home Public Library drew over 400 residents. The library has public computers as well as high-speed Internet access for those bringing their own computers. A Moxie Java is also located inside the library. A large meeting room is sectioned off so library patrons are not disturbed when it is being used. The meeting room can accommodate up to 45 people and is equipped with Internet access.

#### Washington County

- Construction is under way in Weiser on Idaho's first Bi-Mart store. The floor has been poured, and workers are putting up the walls. The city is using a \$360,000 Community Development Block Grant from the state to replace a sewer line to the new store. Once completed, Bi-Mart will employ about 50 people and provide benefits.

#### Adams County

- New Meadows recently extended for up to a year its moratorium on subdivisions of over 10 lots and on applications for zoning changes and annexations. City officials want time to upgrade infrastructure to accommodate further growth.
- With twice the snow it had a year ago, Brundage Mountain Resort has extended its daily operations by one week. If all goes well, the resort may stay open on weekends until the end of April.

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